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FLOOR DEBATE

March 13, 2002      LB 1073

body. LB 1073 is a bill that was brought to me in the fall by a group of people from across the state who work in the area of child passenger safety. It includes people who work in local safety councils, people in your police departments who are trained in child passenger safety and help families learn how to appropriately restrain their children. It includes medical personnel. And their concern mirrors a national concern about current law across the country. And many states have responded, and many states are considering this same bill this year in their legislative sessions. And they're responding to issues that were first raised in the mid-90s, and research has recently been completed on, and it primarily deals with the fact that children between the ages of 4 and through age 7 are still dying and being injured at very high rates on our nation's highways, and here in Nebraska. And the leading cause of death and injury to children in Nebraska is motor vehicle accidents. This bill has several components; the first deals with the issue of children who are too young to be in adult safety restraints, in seat belts. Some of the information that's been provided to you, and I have more to present, but since we're only going to go about a half hour here I'll save some of it for later. But what we know is that a seat belt, when a child is this young, under age 8, cuts them across the neck, cuts across their vital organs. Unlike us...those of us who are adults, who are appropriately restrained in these, that can have severe injuries to children, neck injuries, and other types of injuries that...that I'll go into more detail later, because they're inappropriately restrained. And Nebraska's law requires that they be restrained. It doesn't specify for children under age 5, however, that they have to be in a...an appropriate restraint as defined by federal regulation. An appropriate restraint for this age group is probably a booster seat. And so this bill seeks to correct that gap in our state law, because the best way we can help educate people about what is safest for their children, and for themselves, is through law, through education, and through enforcement. People in this state didn't wear seat belts until the seat belt law became the law. People didn't put their children in an infant and a child booster...child safety seats until it became a law. Usage went up because people understood what was appropriate for those age groups. So we're at a point in our history where we need to go